

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

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TAGS: MASS, SA

SUBJECT: PUBLICITY ON SAUDI MILITARY TRAINING IN U.S.

1. BACKGROUND - RECRUITS OF ROYAL SAUDI NAVAL FORCES (RSNF) HAVE BEEN UNDERGOING TRAINING AT RECRUIT TRAINING CENTER IN SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA SINCE AUGUST 1974 WITH LITTLE INTEREST MANIFESTED BY NEWS MEDIA, EITHER INITIALLY OR DURING THE ENSUING SIX MONTHS. PUBLIC AFFAIRS (PA) GUIDANCE REGARDING TRAINING AT SAN DIEGO FOR RSNF WAS PROMULGATED 2 AUG 74 PRIOR TO COMMENCEMENT OF TRAINING; VIZ., PA ACTIVITIES TO BE LOW KEY; MEDIA QUERIES WHICH COULD BE ADDRESSED INCLUDED NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN TRAINING, STUDENTS COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, STUDENTS BEING TRAINED UNDER FOREIGN MILITARY SALES, DURATION OF TRAINING AND DESCRIPTION OF TRAINING; QUERIES ON TRAINING COSTS TO BE REFERRED TO THE SAUDI ARABIAN EMBASSY; REQUESTS FOR INTERVIEWS TO BE COORDINATED WITH OASD (PA). PA GUIDANCE WAS EXPANDED ON 6 DEC 74 TO PROVIDE PAO REP AT SAN DIEGO WITH FULLY COORDINATED RESPONSES TO EIGHTEEN LIKELY QUESTIONS

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WHICH COULD BE EXPECTED FROM MEDIA. THE NAVAL TRAINING

CENTER IS LOCATED ON AN OPEN AREA. CIVILIAN SECURITY PERSONNEL POSTED AT ENTRANCE GATES. SECURITY PERSONNEL DO NOT RESTRICT ACCESS OF VISITORS TO BASE, AND ON 19 FEB 75 AN UNMARKED VAN CARRYING TV CAMERA EQUIPMENT

ENTERED. TV COVERAGE OF SAUDI RECRUITS ON DRILL FIELD WAS THUS OBTAINED BY LOCAL NBC AFFILIATE AND RUN ON NATIONWIDE TV DURING A.M. NEWS ON 20 FEB. COVERAGE WAS ALSO OBTAINED WITH OFF-BASE ZOOM LENS THROUGH FENCE, ALTHOUGH OFF-BASE COVERAGE NOT NECESSARY SINCE BASE IS OPEN TO PUBLIC AND THERE IS NO PROVISION TO ENFORCE RESTRICTED USE OF CAMERAS. AS A RESULT OF THE 19 FEB COVERAGE, PA GUIDANCE WAS PROVIDED BY OASD (PA) 20 FEB AS FOLLOWS:

A. TV FILM CREWS MAY CONTINUE TO BE PERMITTED ABOARD TRAINING FACILITIES NORMALLY OPEN TO PUBLIC.

B. FOREIGN TRAINEES MAY BE FILMED ON A NOT TO INTERFERE BASIS WITH THE FOLLOWING RESTRICTIONS WHICH MAY BE REMOVED ONLY WITH APPROVAL FROM FOREIGN EMBASSY OFFICIALS:

- (1) NO INTERVIEWS WITH FOREIGN STUDENTS.
- (2) NO FILMING OF STUDENTS IN A CLASSROOM SITUATION.
- (3) PHOTO EQUIPMENT TO BE KEPT AT REASONABLE DISTANCE TO PRECLUDE DISTRACTION OF CLOSE-UP SHOTS.

FILM TAKEN BY NETWORK ON 20 FEB WAS AIRED BY NBC AND ABC THAT EVENING. INCIDENTALLY, APPEARANCE OF RECRUITS WAS OUTSTANDING FROM STANDPOINT OF UNIFORMS, RESPONSE TO COMMANDS (IN ARABIC), DRILL PRECISION AND OBVIOUS ESPRIT DE CORPS.

2. PROBLEM - ON 26 FEB AP AND SIGMA NEWS AGENCIES ANNOUNCED THEIR INTENTION OF RETURNING FOR ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHS. WHEN SO ADVISED, RSNF LIAISON OFFICER AT SAN DIEGO SIGNIFIED HIS INTENTION, IN CARRYING OUT SPIRIT OF ORDERS OF HIGHER SAUDI AUTHORITY, TO INTERFERE PHYSICALLY WITH ATTEMPTED PHOTO COVERAGE, EVEN TO POINT UNCLASSIFIED

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OF INFLICTING BODILY HARM AND PROPERTY DAMAGE. HIS POSITION IS FIRM AND NOT LIKELY TO BE ALTERED SHORT OF A DIRECT ORDER FROM RSNF IN-COUNTRY OR FROM SAUDI EMBASSY. INTERIM STOP-GAP MEASURE ATTAINED BY CONDUCTING TRAINING FOR RSNF RECRUITS IN CLASSROOMS 26 AND 27 FEB, THUS KEEPING PERSONNEL OFF DRILL FIELD AND OUT OF CAMERA RANGE. THIS IS AN IMPRACTICAL LONG-TERM MEASURE, SINCE IT INTERFERES WITH TRAINING, CONFRONTES MEDIA

WITH OBVIOUS PLOY AND EXACERBATES ATTRACTION OF ATTENTION. A FINAL SOLUTION MUST BE DETERMINED AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITY. IN ABSENCE OF AMBASSADOR SOWAYEL AND COL. SHUBAILEY, CHARGE D'AFFAIRES HAS BEEN CONSULTED AND HAS PROBABLY RELAYED SYNOPSIS OF SITUATION

TO RIYADH.

3. RECOMMENDED SOLUTION - SINCE THERE ARE NO REASONABLE MEANS AVAILABLE TO PREVENT MEDIA FROM OBTAINING PHOTOGRAPHIC COVERAGE, EITHER OFF-BASE OR ON-BASE, AND SINCE PERPETUATION OF STEPS TO KEEP RECRUITS OFF DRILL FIELD WOULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE TO THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH THEY ARE UNDERGOING TRAINING, IT WOULD APPEAR IN THE OVERALL BEST INTERESTS OF THE RSNF AND SAG TO ADOPT A POLICY OF INTERPOSING NO OBJECTION TO OCCASIONAL PHOTOGRAPHIC COVERAGE ON THE FRILL FIELD. THE ADVANTAGES WHICH MIGHT ACCRUE FROM SUCH RELAXATION OF HARDLINE OPPOSITION TO PHOTOGRAPHY COULD INCLUDE:

A. REDUCTION IN INTENSITY OF MEDIA INTERESTS.

B. ENHANCE PRESTIGE OF SAUDI RECRUITS, WHO ALREADY HAVE PROJECTED AN INITIALLY IMPRESSIVE IMAGE ON NATIONWIDE TV.

C. MINIMIZE LIKELIHOOD OF ADVERSE INCIDENT RESULTING FROM CONTINUATION OF RSNF OPPOSITION TO PHOTOGRAPHIC COVERAGE. FURTHER DENIAL TO AN INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE SUCH AS AP COULD RESULT IN THE WIRE SERVICE WRITING A STORY WHICH REPORTS THE DENIAL. THE STORY COULD BE CONSTRUED BY SOME TO IMPLY A SECRET AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE USG AND SAG AS THE REASON FOR THE DENIAL. SUCH AN INFERENCE FROM THE PRESS REPORT COULD TRIGGER ADVERSE U.S. CONGRESSIONAL UNCLASSIFIED

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REACTION, NOT TO MENTION POSSIBLE ADVERSE WORLDWIDE REACTWON.

D. RECOGNITION OF THE REAL-LIFE SITUATION WHICH EXISTS IN THE FREE PRESS ENVIRONMENT OF THE UNITED STATES. IN LIGHT OF ABOVE, REQUEST YOU CONSULT WITH APPROPRIATE LEVEL IN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND AVIATION (MODA) AND SOLICIT THEIR SUPPORT BY DIRECTING SAUDI MILITARY IN CONUS TO INTERPOSE NO OBJECTION TO PHOTOGRAPHIC COVERAGE OF RSNF RECRUITS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE 20 FEB 75 GUIDANCE SPECIFIED IN SUB PARAGRAPHS 1A AND 1B ABOVE. SINCE MEDIA HAVE BEEN ADVISED THAT RSNF RECRUIT SCHEDULE WILL HAVE PERSONNEL INDOORS FOR NEXT DAY OR TWO AND THEREFORE BEYOND CAMERA REACH, PROBLEM PROBABLY WILL NOT RESURFACE UNTIL AFTER THE WEEKEND. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE HAVE RESPONSE

REFLECTING SAG REACTION AND HOPEFULLY FAVORABLE POSITION
ON RECOMMENDED GUIDANCE NOT LATER THAN EARLY MORNING
MONDAY, 3 MARCH, WASHINGTON TIME.

4. ABOVE PROVIDED BY DOD. KISSINGER

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